

# Higher Education Challenge Grants Program

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*FY 2007 Request for Applications*

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 1, 2007**



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**

**Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service**

**COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE;  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**HIGHER EDUCATION CHALLENGE GRANTS PROGRAM**

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.217.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on February 1, 2007 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFA's for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy, Oversight, and Funds Management Staff; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: [RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov). (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Higher Education Challenge Grants Program RFA.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** CSREES announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Higher Education Challenge Grants Program (HEC) for fiscal year (FY) 2007 to stimulate and enable colleges and universities to provide the quality of education necessary to produce baccalaureate or higher degree level graduates capable of strengthening the Nation's food and agricultural scientific and professional workforce. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2007 is approximately \$5.5 million.

This notice identifies the objectives for HEC projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a HEC grant. CSREES additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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## **PART I-FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

Section 1405 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA), as amended, (7 U.S.C. 3121) designates the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead Federal agency for agriculture research, extension and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Authority for this program is contained in section 1417(b)(1) of NARETPA (7 U.S.C. 3152(b)(1)). Section 1417 of NARETPA authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, who has delegated the authority to the Administrator of CSREES, to make competitive grants to eligible institutions, for a period not to exceed five years, to formulate and administer programs to enhance college and university teaching in agriculture, natural resources, forestry, veterinary medicine, human and family and consumer sciences, disciplines closely allied to the food and agricultural system, and rural economic, community and business development.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

Through improved teaching, the Higher Education Challenge (HEC) Grants Program seeks to attain the following two Program Goals:

- to increase the number of graduates with a baccalaureate (or higher) degree in the food and agricultural sciences, and
- to help students achieve their career goals and to help meet workplace needs by increasing the quality of undergraduate instruction (e.g., through modernizing instructional technologies and methodologies; updating disciplinary content; and developing students' analytical, interpersonal, leadership, communications, problem-solving, computational, and decision-making skills and abilities).

To achieve these Goals, all applications must address all of the following five funding priorities:

1. Address at least one of the Degree Levels (Part I, C.1.); and
2. Focus upon at least one of the Priority Need Areas (Part I, C.2.); and
3. Select at least one of the Educational Strategies (Part I, C.3.); and
4. Include the two HEC Program Goals (above) in the project's Evaluation Plan (Part I, C.4.), and
5. Communicate project accomplishments in the Dissemination Plan (Part I, C.5.).

### **C. Program Area Description**

#### **1. Degree Levels**

Applications must address one of the following **Degree Levels**:

- (a) **Baccalaureate degree-level** teaching improvement projects in the food and agricultural sciences;

- (b) **Masters degree-level** teaching improvement projects only in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary studies; or
- (c) **First professional degree-level** teaching improvement projects in **veterinary medicine (DVM)**.

## 2. Priority Need Areas

All applications must also support activities related to the delivery of for-credit, academic coursework that prepares graduates in one of the following critical HEC Program Priority Need Areas:

- (a) animal or plant biosecurity;
- (b) new, bio-based products and technologies;
- (c) healthy food choices and lifestyles, and obesity;
- (d) human sciences that address rural youth, family and community well-being;
- (e) forest and rangeland health and protection including improved soil, air, and water quality; or
- (f) globalization of agricultural business, markets and trade

Where appropriate, projects should form partnerships among several colleges and/or universities (e.g., ‘centers of excellence’) to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic instruction that reduces instructional duplication and costs. Such projects may include regional or interstate curriculum development, faculty sharing, cross enrollments, joint degrees (e.g., DVM/MPH), or similar, closely-related academic activities culminating in inter-institutional, academic program delivery.

Emphasis is placed on projects that have a positive impact on large numbers of students and that achieve cost effective economies of scale in meeting the two HEC Program Goals.

## 3. Educational Strategies

- (a) In addition, applications must use at least one of the **Educational Strategies** identified below. Applications must demonstrate how the chosen Strategy will help achieve one or both of the HEC Program Goals as well as advance your chosen HEC Priority Need Area. Your Strategy should have broad-based applicability beyond a single course or an individual instructor.

### (1) Curricula Design and Materials Development

This Strategy promotes developing new (or adapting existing) curricula and related materials to meet changes anticipated within the domestic or international food and agricultural sciences system.

Projects addressing this Strategy must be innovative in improve the quality of instruction. Projects should update disciplinary content; develop students’ analytical, interpersonal, leadership, communications, problem-solving, computational, and decision-making skills and abilities; and should move away

from fragmented, discipline-specific, lecture-oriented instruction and toward integrated, multidisciplinary, learner-centered instruction. Applicants are expected to demonstrate how the project will reach large audiences efficiently and effectively, provide hands-on learning experiences, extend learning beyond the classroom, reinforce recent research on how to motivate students to learn, retain, apply, and transfer knowledge, skills, and competencies, and integrate and synthesize knowledge from several disciplines.

(2) **Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching**

This Strategy prepares academic leadership for sustainable change to address emerging student clientele (demographic composition and learning styles), improving teaching competency (subject matter expertise and pedagogy), or developing student recruitment and advising skills to increase the number of graduates with a baccalaureate (or higher) degree in the food and agricultural sciences (e.g., increasing faculty knowledge about domestic and international career opportunities, and increasing their understanding of underrepresented populations and cultures).

Projects addressing this Strategy must enable teaching faculty to help students attain their career goals and to better address workplace needs. Activities may include helping faculty gain experience with recent developments or innovative technology relevant to their teaching responsibilities; work under the guidance and direction of experts who have substantial expertise in an area related to project goals; work with scientists or professionals in government, industry, or other colleges or universities to learn new applications in a field; expand competence with new methods of information delivery; or increase understanding of the special needs of non-traditional students or students from groups that are underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences workforce.

(3) **Instruction Delivery Systems**

This Strategy encourages the development and use of alternative methods of delivering instruction to help increase the number of graduates with a baccalaureate (or higher) degree in the food and agricultural sciences; and to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs. Multi-institutional, regional, national or international collaborations are encouraged.

Projects addressing this Strategy must demonstrate increases in instructional quality, reductions in duplication of educational resources, or decreases in instructional expenses. Examples may include multi-institutional or interstate approaches to curriculum development, faculty sharing, cross enrollments, joint degrees, regionalization of academic programs, regional and national workshops and symposia, and similar methodologies.

(4) **Student Experiential Learning**

This Strategy encourages the development of new student learning opportunities to help students meet their career goals and to help address workplace needs either domestic or international. Approaches may include experiences where students are placed in team-oriented, problem-solving, decision-making situations in the context of real-world situations. Experiential learning in laboratory research or field-based internships is also encouraged, but should be within fields of science with demonstrated shortages of scientific and professional personnel.

Projects addressing this Strategy must: (1) demonstrate how the experience will help meet students' career goals or produce 'society-ready' graduates, (2) contain an evaluation process—involving both the faculty and/or employer or mentor—to assure that students meet project objectives, and (3) document that the field of science under consideration is experiencing a shortage of scientific and professional personnel, and how the project plans to address this deficiency.

Funds may be requested for materials/supplies to facilitate a student's broad exposure to research/field techniques and methodologies, reasonable travel expenses and per diem related to student educational experiences (e.g., field trips, data collection, and scientific meetings), and support for students (stipends) while working in domestic or international research/field settings (including paid internships and practica) directly supporting this funded project.

Requested funds are expected to primarily support stipends for students while they are working in research/field settings. Grant funds may not be used for tuition, room and board, fees, or student financial assistance (scholarships, fellowships, etc.). See Notes (b) and (c) after paragraph (5) below.

(5) **Student Recruitment and Retention**

This Strategy seeks to increase the number of graduates with a baccalaureate (or higher) degree in the food and agricultural sciences, through the development of new and innovative counseling, marketing, career information, and other projects that: (a) increase student enrollment in disciplines with documented, critical workforce shortages; (b) target non-traditional students and students from groups that are underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences workforce; or (c) support the development of new student retention programs focusing on the academic, social, or cultural needs of freshmen, transfer, or other at-risk students.

Projects addressing this Strategy must demonstrate how proposed activities will provide more efficient and effective strategies than existing institutional programs, to increase both the quality and quantity of targeted students.

Project funds may be used to hire peer counselors or mentors assisting with these recruitment/retention activities. Project funds **may not** be used to provide entering students with scholarships, fellowships, or other forms of financial assistance.

- (b) Note: CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority to address any Strategy above **may not** be used for student tuition remission, room and board, fees or other financial assistance (scholarships, fellowships, etc.). Also, funds **may not** be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities (i.e., greenhouses, laboratories, or other structures). Federal Cost Principles governing this grant program state that items not eligible for Federal funding may not be used as an applicant's contribution toward meeting matching requirements.
- (c) Note: A teacher or student recipient (eligible participant) receiving Federal funds via any Strategy above must be a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this RFA. Where eligibility is claimed under 8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (22), documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

#### **4. Evaluation Plan**

In addition to evaluating short-term project goals in the Evaluation Plan (see Part IV, B.1.b.(2)(e)), include how you intend to measure success in meeting the two long-term HEC Program Goals (Part I, B.).

For quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data to make comparisons in meeting HEC Program Goals, applicants should reference the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) resource at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>; the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the U.S. Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resources System 2005-2010* at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/supplydemand/2005-2010/>, or other, similar source(s).

#### **5. Dissemination Plan**

Include in the project's Dissemination Plan (see Part IV, B.1.b.(2)(f)), a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. This may include educational journals or other professional discipline publications, and presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops, including the HEC Project Director's Conference (see Part VI, D.1.).



## **PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. CSREES anticipates approximately \$5.5 million will be available to fund applications in FY 2007

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2007, applications may be submitted to the HEC Program as one of the following two types of requests:

**(1) New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the HEC Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

**(2) Resubmission application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the HEC Program but not funded. Applicants must respond to the previous review panel summary (use R&R Other Project Information, Field 11 on the Form.). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

### **C. Project Types**

There is no limit on the number of applications that may be submitted by an eligible applicant, as defined in Part III, A. Successful applicant institutions will only be awarded a maximum of three (3) grants per year under this grants program.

Project periods may range from eighteen (18) to thirty-six (36) months. Projects should conclude no sooner than eighteen (18) months after the award date in order to allow applicants sufficient time to evaluate the results and report the impacts.

Applicants may submit either:

#### **1. Regular Project (Single Institution)**

Applicants may request up to \$150,000 (total, not per year) for a Regular Project Proposal.

In a Regular Project Proposal, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

#### **2. Joint Project Proposal (Applicant + Partners)**

Applicants may request up to \$500,000 (total, not per year) for a Joint Project Proposal.

In a Joint Project Proposal, the applicant executes the project with assistance from at least two additional partners. The additional partners must share grant funds (see explanation of

required funds distribution among partners in the definition of a Joint Project Proposal in Part VIII, E.).

Note: In addition to submitting the R&R Budget Form, the lead institution must include the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment Form and enter budget information for all Joint Project applicants. The forms should clearly identify the total grant funding anticipated for the applicant and each partner to demonstrate the required sharing percentage. All expenditures for the applicant and all partners should be further itemized in the Budget Narrative.

Funds **do not** have to be divided equally among project years.

## **PART III-ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Applications may be submitted by: (a) U.S. public or private nonprofit colleges and universities offering a baccalaureate or first professional degree in at least one discipline or area of the food and agricultural sciences; (b) land-grant colleges and universities (including land grant institutions in the Insular Areas); (c) colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences; and (d) other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences. A college or university must meet the definition of an Eligible Institution as stated in this RFA (see Definitions, Part VIII, E.). An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in CSREES returning the application without review or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude CSREES from making an award.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

For the purposes of this program, the individual branches of a State university or other system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree-granting institutions are treated as separate institutions, and are therefore eligible for HEC Grants Program awards. Separate branches or campuses of a college or university that are not individually accredited as degree-granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions. An institution eligible to receive an award under this program includes a research foundation maintained by an eligible college or university. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

Eligible institutions must demonstrate capacity for, and a significant ongoing commitment to, the teaching of food and agricultural sciences generally, and to the specific need and/or discipline(s) for which a grant is requested.

A teacher or student recipient (eligible participant) receiving Federal funds above must be a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this RFA. (See Part VIII, Definitions.) Where eligibility is claimed under 8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (22), documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

A grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources (see Part IV, B.2, Budget, for additional details).

## PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### A. Address to Request Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to CSREES in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AOR should see [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. Download and install PureEdge Viewer, a small, free program that provides access to the grant application. See [http://www.grants.gov/resources/download\\_software.jsp#pureedge](http://www.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp#pureedge).
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions**,” enter the funding opportunity number, “USDA-CSREES-CGP-000241,” in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “[CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov](#).” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

**If assistance is needed to access the application package** (e.g., downloading or navigating PureEdge forms, using PureEdge with a Macintosh computer), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

- Grants.gov customer support  
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726  
Business Hours: M-F 7:00 am – 9 pm Eastern Standard Time  
Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

See <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

## B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “[A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov.](#)” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

**Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide.**

### 1. R&R Other Project Information Form.

- a. Project Summary/Abstract (Field 6. on the Form). List the project’s intended Degree Level (from Part I, C.1.); the primary Priority Need Area (from Part I, C.2.); and the primary Educational Strategy (from Part I, C.3.). Briefly summarize the project objectives and include all measurable project outcomes. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the two HEC Program Goals (Part I, B.).
- b. Project Narrative (Field 7. on the Form).

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text and up to a maximum of 5 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (25 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Reviewers will not be required to review material in excess of this limit.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following: (Note: To facilitate proposal review and evaluation, include the following, underlined wording as headings in the Project Narrative, followed by the applicant’s response for each item.)

- (1) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem:
  - (a) Institutional Long-range Goals. Demonstrate how the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or how the project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.
  - (b) Identification of Educational Problem and Project Impact. List the project’s intended Degree Level (from Part I, C.1.); the primary Priority Need Area (from Part I, C.2.); and the primary Educational Strategy (from Part I, C.3.). Clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address at least one of the Educational Strategy(s) described in Part I, C.3. Briefly explain the project’s anticipated, overall impact on improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education.

- (c) Project Justification. Clearly state the specific instructional problem or opportunity to be addressed. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed project. Discuss how the project will be of value at the State, regional, national, or international level(s). Describe any ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project for which previous funding was received under this program.
  - (d) Innovation. Describe the proposal's creative approach to improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education, solving an education problem, or advancing educational equity.
  - (e) Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Indicate how the project is relevant to multiple disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences education, or with other academic curricula. Also, discuss whether the project may be adapted by, or serve as a model for, other institutions.
- (2) Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:
- (a) Objectives. Cite and discuss the specific project objectives to be accomplished.
  - (b) Plan of Operation and Methodology. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.
  - (c) Timetable. Identify all important project milestones and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout.
  - (d) Products, Results and Measurable Outcomes. Explain the expected products and results, and their potential impact (outcome) on strengthening food and agricultural sciences education in the United States. (**Important Note: Make sure to differentiate among the three terms:** “Products” may be actual items or services acquired with funds, e.g., “...developed three, new Web-based courses containing supplemental materials”; “Results” are intended or unintended consequences of the project, e.g., “...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours”; and “Outcomes/Impacts” are a measure of the results by comparing what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., “...an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, Web-based course materials”.)
  - (e) Evaluation Plans. Provide a methodology and implementation plan for evaluating the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable outcomes during the project. Indicate the criteria, and corresponding weight of each, to be used in the evaluation process, describe any data to be collected and analyzed, and explain the methodology that will be used to determine the extent to which the needs underlying the project are met.

Include project assessments on meeting the two HEC Program Goals (Part I, B.). In addition to qualitative assessments, please include any quantitative measures indicating how you plan to measure success.

- (f) Dissemination Plans. The proposal must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts...etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. Discuss the institution's commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication.
  - (g) Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts. Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to strengthen food and agricultural sciences education (e.g., involvement of faculty in related disciplines at the same institution, joint projects with other educational institutions, or cooperative activities with business or industry). Also explain how it will stimulate academia, the States, or the private sector to join with the Federal partner in enhancing food and agricultural sciences education. Provide evidence, via letters from the parties involved in the partnership or collaborative arrangement.
- (3) Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:
- (a) Institutional Commitment and Capability. Demonstrate that the program administration is committed to this project and has the capability to ensure its completion.
  - (b) Institutional Resources. Document that necessary institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institutional resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.
  - (c) Academic Enhancement. Document how this project will improve and strengthen teaching at the institution (including any partner institutions). Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period.
  - (d) Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the grant period ends, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?
- (4) Key Personnel: Discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process.
- (5) Budget and Cost-effectiveness:
- (a) Budget. In addition to the separate, required budget forms and budget narrative, discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff time and

salary, travel, equipment, etc., are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Justify that the total budget, including funds requested from USDA and any matching support provided, are allocated adequately between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s), and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project. Provide a summary of sources and amounts of all third party matching support. If the proposal addresses more than one Educational Strategy (see Part I, C.3.), applicants should include estimates of the proportion of the funds requested from USDA that will support each respective area.

- (b) Cost-effectiveness. Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on an Educational Strategy, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

## 2. R&R Budget

- a. Budget Justification (Field K on the form; attach as a PDF.)

All budget categories, for which support is requested, must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget and justified separately. Use the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment Form and enter information for all Joint Project applicants.

- b. Matching (Field K on the form; attach as a PDF.)

A grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. Applicants should identify matching funds and the sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page. Cash and non-cash contributions from the institution and any third parties should be identified. CSREES anticipates that indirect costs will be limited to 20 percent of total federal funds awarded (TFFA), therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 20 percent of TFFA. Another method of calculating the maximum allowable is 25 percent of the total direct costs. (See Part IV.D., below, "Funding Restrictions".) **Indirect costs may be claimed under the Federal portion of the award, may be claimed as matching (if no indirect is requested) or may be split between the two (as matching and claimed costs). Nevertheless, the recipient may not claim unrecovered indirect costs as matching.**

**Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:**

**for any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone**



**number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and**

**for any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the ARs of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.**

**If the contribution is to be split between cash and in-kind, the exact dollar amount for each category must be clearly stated. The letter should also clearly state the budget categories that the contributed dollars should be applied to and clearly state the individual items of in-kind contributions. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support. Any cost sharing commitments specified in the proposal will be referenced and included as a condition of an award resulting from this announcement.**

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments, or A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

### **3. CSREES Supplemental Information Form**

a. Program Code (Field 2. on the Form). Enter the program code name, "Higher Education Challenge Grants Program," and the program code, "ER."

### **C. Submission Dates and Times**

**Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.**

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on February 1, 2007 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message from CSREES within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable

RFA (for the Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR) the Program Contacts are specified under subsection 1.5 of the SBIR Program Solicitation) and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in (for competitive programs) the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel or (for non-competitive programs) a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

#### **D. Funding Restrictions**

CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority **may not** be used for student tuition remission, room and board, fees or other financial assistance (scholarships, fellowships, etc.). Also, funds **may not** be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities (i.e., greenhouses, laboratories, or other structures). Federal Cost Principles governing this grant program state that items not eligible for Federal funding may also not be used as an applicant's contribution toward meeting matching requirements.

The FY 2006 Appropriations Act limited indirect costs to 20 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. CSREES anticipates that the FY 2007 Appropriations Act will include a similar limitation. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 20 percent of total federal funds awarded. Another method of calculating the maximum allowable is 25 percent of the total direct costs. If no rate has been negotiated, a reasonable dollar amount (equivalent to or less than 20 percent of total Federal funds requested) in lieu of indirect costs may be requested, subject to approval by USDA. This same indirect cost limitation applies to subcontracts.

Please note that if the 2007 Appropriations Act contains a different indirect cost limitation CSREES will contact each successful applicant to apply the correct rate prior to the award of a grant.

#### **E. Other Submission Requirements**

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov."

## **PART V-APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. General**

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA.

#### **1. Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem (30 points).**

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of food and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

#### **2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).**

This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational or research support provided to the applicant institution through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

#### **3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).**

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

#### **4. Key Personnel (15 points).**

This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and dissemination of these findings.

#### **5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).**

This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority Educational or Research needs.

### **C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

### **D. Organizational Management Information**

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program. CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

## **PART VI-AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

### **B. Award Notice**

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PD's chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view CSREES award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and
- (11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A--USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3--USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A 129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A--USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121 – USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015--USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220 and 230) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301 6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017--USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018--USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019--USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3052--USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A 133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non profit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407--CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute)--prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq.--Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

## **D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

### **1. Project Directors Conference**

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors must attend at least one national Project Directors' meeting, if offered, in Washington, D.C., or any other announced location. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in the application's budget under travel expenses.

### **2. Annual Performance Report**

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact person within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project, and annually thereafter during the life of the grant. Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. Annual Performance Reports are to be submitted through the CRIS system described in paragraph 4., below.

### **3. Final Performance Report**

A Final Performance Report must be submitted to the Agency Contact within 90 days after the expiration date of the project. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives and accomplishments; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the Project Director(s), students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The report must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) have been published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. The Final Performance Report is to be submitted through the CRIS system described in paragraph 4., below.

### **4. Current Research Information System (CRIS) Reports**

Grantees are required to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). The CRIS database contains narrative project information, progress/impact statements, and final technical reports that are made available to the public. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparing



and submission of project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the agency contact. Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before CSREES funds will be released. Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. For more information about CRIS, visit <http://cris.csrees.usda.gov>.

## **5. Other Reports**

Grantees should be aware that CSREES may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with CSREES personnel, or persons retained by CSREES, in evaluating the institutional context and the impact of any supported project. Grantees may be asked to provide general information on any students and faculty supported, in whole or in part, by a grant awarded under this program; information that may be requested includes, but is not limited to, standardized academic achievement test scores, grade point average, academic standing, career patterns, age, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship, and disability.

## **PART VII-AGENCY CONTACT**

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Mr. P. Gregory Smith; National Program Leader; Higher Education Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2251; telephone: (202) 720-2067; fax: (202) 720-2030; e-mail: [HEC@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:HEC@csrees.usda.gov).

## **PART VIII-OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Access To Review Information**

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

### **B. Use of Funds; Changes**

#### **1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility**

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

#### **2. Changes in Project Plans**

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

### **C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **D. Regulatory Information**

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

### **E. Definitions**

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions are applicable:

Authorized departmental officer means the Secretary or any employee of the Department with delegated authority to issue or modify grant instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

Authorized representative means the president or chief executive officer of the applicant organization or the official, designated by the president or chief executive officer of the applicant organization, who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

Budget period means the interval of time (usually 12 months) into which the project period is divided for budgetary and reporting purposes.

Cash contributions means the applicant's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

Citizen or national of the United States means: (1) A citizen or native resident of a State, the District of Columbia, or any Insular Area; or, (2) A person defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States. Where eligibility is claimed solely on the basis of permanent allegiance, documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

College or University means an educational institution in any State which: (1) Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate; (2) Is legally authorized within such

State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; (3) Provides an educational program for which a baccalaureate degree or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) Is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the Secretary of Education has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

Educational Strategy means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the Request for Applications and addressed by the applicant's proposal. Educational Strategies are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific areas targeted for funding support in the Request for Applications.

Eligible institution means a land-grant college or university (including land-grant institutions in the Insular Areas), colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences. An eligible institution includes a research foundation maintained by an eligible college or university.

Eligible participant means an individual who is a citizen or national of the United States as defined in this section.

Food and agricultural sciences means basic, applied, and developmental research, extension, and teaching activities in the food and fiber, agricultural, renewable natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, in the broadest sense of these terms, including but not limited to, activities relating to the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, utilization, consumption, research, and development of food and agriculturally related products and services, and inclusive of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, rural human ecology, rural economic, community, or business development, and closely allied disciplines.

Grantee means the organization designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to which a grant is awarded.

Insular Area means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Joint project proposal means a proposal for a project: (1) which will involve the applicant institution working in cooperation with **two or more** other entities not legally affiliated with the applicant institution, including other schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, junior

colleges, units of State government, private sector organizations, or a consortium of institutions; and (2) where the applicant institution and each cooperating entity will assume a significant role in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution submitting a joint project proposal must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 50 percent of the awarded funds, and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.** Only the applicant institution must meet the definition of an eligible institution as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a joint project proposal are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution.

Land-grant colleges and universities means those institutions eligible to receive funds under the Act of July 2, 1862 (12 Stat. 503-505, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 301-305, 307 and 308), including the land-grant institutions in the Insular Areas; or the Act of August 30, 1890 (26 Stat. 417-419, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 321-326 and 328), including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University.

Matching or Cost-sharing means that portion of allowable project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of in-kind contributions.

Nonprofit, as applied to a school, junior or community college, agency, organization, or institution, means a school, junior or community college, agency, organization, or institution owned and operated by one or more nonprofit corporations or associations, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Outcomes means specific, measurable project results and benefits that, when assessed and reported, indicate the project's plan of operation has been achieved.

Peer reviewers means experts or consultants qualified by training and experience to give expert advice on the scientific and technical merit of grant applications or the relevance of those applications to one or more of the proposal evaluation criteria. Peer reviewers may be ad hoc or convened as a panel.

Plan of Operation means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's outcomes. At a minimum, the plan should include a timetable indicating how outcomes are achieved, a description of resources to be used or acquired, and the responsibilities expected of all project personnel.

Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer.

Project means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant award.

Project director means the single individual designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Authorized Departmental Officer who is responsible for the direction and management of the project [also known as a principal investigator for research activities].

Project period means the total length of time, as stated in the award document and modifications thereto, if any, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

Regular project proposal means a proposal for a project: (1) where the applicant institution will be the sole entity involved in the execution of the project; or (2) which will involve the applicant institution and one or more other entities, but where the involvement of the other entity(ies) does not meet the requirements for a joint project proposal as defined in this section.

Secretary means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

State means any one of the fifty States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

Teaching means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and matters related thereto (such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies) conducted by eligible educational institutions.

Third party in-kind contributions means non-cash contributions of property or services provided by non-Federal third parties, including real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

United States means the several States, the territories and possessions of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

## **F. CSREES' Grants.gov Implementation Plans**

CSREES is continuing to develop its capacity to exchange proposal and grant data electronically with its grantees through [Grants.gov](#) and to process, review, and award proposals and grants electronically.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, CSREES offered an electronic application option for select grant programs and partnered with five institutions to use Grants.gov Apply. CSREES utilized the SF-424 R&R (Research and Related) forms package (see 70 FR 9656, published in the Federal Register on February 28, 2005) along with CSREES Agency-specific forms and instructions to receive the electronic applications. These pilot activities were successful and provided lessons for applicants and CSREES.

As a result, for the FY 2007 (October 1, 2006-September 30, 2007) cycle, CSREES is requiring electronic submission through Grants.gov for some programs while providing a Grants.gov option for others. Please visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/fy07changes.html> for information about FY 2007 submission requirements by program. For more information about CSREES' Grants.gov plans, including important announcements, program implementation, and

detailed requirements, see the CSREES' web site, [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/other\\_links/egov/egov.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/other_links/egov/egov.html). The information on these web sites will be updated as appropriate. It is suggested that the sites be visited periodically for important updates.

#### **G. DUNS Number**

A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Therefore, project directors should contact an AOR to obtain the DUNS number or have the AOR begin the steps needed to obtain one.

For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS>. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.